

Guest Blogger Jenny: Mommy Online Referral Groups Are Paradise for the Parsimonious

Description



I am a “member” of an online mommy group. It’s a group that, by virtue of a very efficient moderator, has been stripped of any political, humorous, or timely posts. Instead, it has become an online referral source, sort of like a no fee Angie’s List, that seems to be the country of “cheap.”

Now, before you decide I’m some crazed spendthrift, let me assure you that I’m not; I enjoy a bargain just as much as the next person. I do, however, try to keep the bargain buy phenomenon in perspective. I believe in paying for quality. I believe in passing down gently used goods when it’s appropriate. But, I draw the line at looking for bargains when it comes to people.

You know what I’m talking about. There’s a constant search on these online groups for nannies, housekeepers, gardeners, and handymen. The demands are heady: adjectives like “flexible” (in terms of schedule, we assume, not physically), “trustworthy,” “CPR trained,” “licensed,” “compassionate,” and “self motivated” are rife within the posts. But, the other adjective (and synonyms thereof) found accompanying this laundry list of requirements is, invariably, “cheap.”

Now, “cheap” is not an adjective one usually associates with quality. “Cheap” is something shoddy, second rate, cut rate, or even promiscuous (probably not the right definition in this case, but you never know). How this adjective gets paired up with such a lofty list of other requirements is amazing to me, a kind of domestic cluelessness.

Because, you see, the people hired to help you run your home, care for your children, and maintain your home’s physical integrity and exterior décor probably shouldn’t be “cheap.” By hiring “cheap” or underpaying domestic help, it demeans the important jobs these workers perform, and it seems to imply that those who want “cheap” labor don’t really value their homes or children (something that

Iâ€™m pretty sure is not the case).

Yet, the people Iâ€™ve recommended to the group, per requests, have usually had negative experiences. Things like a housekeeper being offered fifty dollars per â€œday,â€• a â€œdayâ€• being described as from 9-2, cleaning a four bedroom, four bathroom house and cooking a reheatable dinner. Thatâ€™s a lot of work for more than a half day for inadequate pay; a really bad deal for any housekeeper. And when the potential employer called me for a reference, her question to me was : â€œIs she going to trash my house?â€• Yeah, sure, I felt like replying. Thatâ€™s why I employed her for seven years.

One time I recommended a really wonderful handyman. This guy has done tons of work for me, plus heâ€™s just great to have around, so trustworthy. All of us have hung out and our kids and his niece and nephew know each other. But every time he went to consult with a potential job gotten through the group, it always ended with an argument over the price and a decision to either put off the work or do it themselves. In other words, it was always a waste of his time, and he wonâ€™t do referrals for the group anymore as a result.

Why is there this fundamental lack of respect for household help? Why is it so undervalued, so thought of as cheap labor? Since when is hiring someone to perform a job an expectation for getting something (actually, quite a LOT of something) for next to nothing?

I have written about these issues before. One commenter accused me of being â€œanti working motherâ€• because I dared to criticize (indeed, parody) the request of one mother looking for the going rates for both legal and illegal nannies. First off, as a semi-working mother, I most certainly would never criticize the real concerns of other working mothers. In fact, Iâ€™m so pro-working parent that I even consider the nannies, housekeepers, and handymen I hire to be working parents, too, deserving a living wage to better their childrenâ€™s lives. Yeah, thatâ€™s right, they have families too.

In the end, I think the quest for â€œcheapâ€• actually cheapens the poster, the group, and the referral pool. Why should I refer someone I deeply value and respect, only to have them be humiliated? Plus, although this group is relatively large at around 750 people, I have a feeling a large percentage of them arenâ€™t in the poorhouse. If youâ€™re looking for domestic help to begin with, you must have extra money to spend, so why be a cheapskate? By hiring someone at a good wage, you not only let the employee know that you respect his or her time and talent, but that you respect your own space as well. And that would be keeping it, in the immortal words of Will Ferrell, â€œclassy.â€•

* Originally published on [The Twin Coach](#)

Jenny Heitz has worked as a staff writer for Coast Weekly in Carmel, freelanced in the South Bay, and then switched to advertising copywriting. Her daughter started 4th grade at Mirman School last year. She previously attended 3rd St. Elementary School. Jenny has been published recently in the Daily News and on Mamapedia, The Well Mom, Sane Moms, Hybrid Mom, The Culture Mom and A Child Grows In Brooklyn. She now writes about gift ideas and products on her blog, [Find A Toad](#).

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